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Space weapons development opposed, not research, Moscow negotiator says

FROM COMBINED DISPATCHES

GENEVA, Switzerland — Chief Soviet arms negotiator Viktor Karpov yesterday said Moscow had never opposed basic scientific research but was sticking to its demand for a ban on development and testing of space weapons in return for reductions in the superpowers' nuclear weapons arsenals.

Mr. Karpov, speaking to reporters before resuming presentation of new Soviet proposals at the 7-month-old superpower arms talks, said the Soviet proposals are reasonable and are aimed at making a success of the Nov. 19-20 summit in Geneva between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

But he also said the proposed deal links any limitation of existing long-range and medium-range nuclear weapons to a scrapping of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI, and a ban on space weapons, including testing and development.

Mr. Reagan has repeatedly said SDI, commonly known as "star wars," is not

negotiable and last week repeated that his \$26 billion program would be continued to develop a defensive shield that can shoot down missiles in space.

The Soviets have proposed a 50 percent cut in the approximately 11,500 "nuclear charges" or warheads in their arsenal.

The U.S. arsenal contains 10,645 total warheads. But only 2,130 of those are on the more accurate land-based missiles compared to 8,500 Soviet highly accurate ICBM warheads.

A recent National Intelligence Estimate, however, indicates the number may be difficult to verify, thereby making warhead constraints difficult to negotiate.

The still-secret National Intelligence Estimate indicates that the main Soviet ICBM, the SS-18, may be deployed with 12 warheads instead of the 10 permitted under SALT II, according to U.S. government sources familiar with the estimate.

Last June, a Soviet negotiator in Geneva told U.S. negotiators the Soviet SSN-20 Typhoon ballistic missile has

been deployed with 10 warheads instead of the nine originally estimated by American intelligence analysts, the source said.

"As a result, constraints on Soviet warheads will be impossible to verify or negotiate," the defense expert said in commenting on the latest Soviet proposal.

Mr. Karpov said the Soviets were not opposed to "basic research, basic science." But he added that, "We are against any research that leads to the creation of space strike weapons."

"Every sane man shouldn't want the 'star wars' project," he said. "It leads to more instability. It leads to an increasing danger of war . . . despite all words to the contrary."

The Soviet proposals — said by officials in Washington to call for cuts of up to 50 percent in nuclear arsenals if SDI is abandoned — were outlined by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in his meeting with President Reagan last Friday at the White House and presented to U.S. arms negotiators in plenary sessions

Monday and Tuesday in Geneva.

The New York Times yesterday quoted American officials as saying the Soviet proposal called on the United States to reduce its long-range and medium-range nuclear weapons by 50 percent, while offering a reduction that would cover only Soviet long-range weapons.

The chief U.S. arms negotiator, Max M. Kampelman, on Monday said the Soviet proposals were "interesting" and would be "studied with care," but he made no comment after yesterday's meeting. Mr. Kampelman was expected to return to Washington today.

Asked if the Soviet Union was taking such a tough stand on SDI that it could block any arms agreement, Mr. Karpov replied, "We are taking a reasonable stand. We are trying to do everything we can that the meeting between Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev is successful, but of course it takes two to do a tango."

"Our proposal is as balanced as I stay on my feet. It covers all three areas of our discussions and is well-balanced. It is balanced as far as the whole complex of problems is concerned."

The Geneva negotiations, which began March 12, deal with space and defense, strategic nuclear weapons, and medium-range systems.

Bill Gertz contributed to this report in Washington.